

Student Voice and Choice at Shelburne Community School: Curriculum is a Conversation

Vermont Stories Discussion Guide

Overview

In this video, 6-8th grade teacher Sam Nelson and his students share the practices they have engaged in to increase student agency in the learning process, including forming a Student Planning Committee that advises on curriculum. This video was filmed at Shelburne Community School in Shelburne, Vermont.

Key Concepts

Negotiated Curriculum: Instead of using a set curriculum, teachers solicit and incorporate student feedback into the learning process, so that students become co-designers of learning.

Student Agency: Students taking ownership in the learning process because they know the goals for their learning and have the skills and confidence to engage in self-directed learning.

Student Planning Committee: The teacher in the video uses this format to formulate a negotiated curriculum in partnership with students. The planning committee meets once per week to discuss curriculum and make determinations about what content to explore, how to explore it, the standards and proficiencies attached to the learning, and how students will demonstrate learning. The underlying philosophy is that as long as students are developing enriching skills, they can apply the content that interests them to the skills.

Student Voice and Choice: This practice means students having ownership in the content they learn, how they learn it, and/or how they demonstrate their learning. It is a key strategy for building student engagement and ownership in the learning process.

Discussion Questions

- How did students choosing the revolution they wanted to study change their experience?
- Where have you seen student voice and choice used in education? What made it effective or ineffective?
- Sam Nelson, the teacher in this video, has set up a student planning committee composed of students that advise on curriculum. How might content, instruction, and assessment shift if students had more input?
- What practices do you think best support student voice and choice?



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- Where would you rank student voice and choice in the list of teaching priorities? Is it essential, helpful, or unnecessary?

More Information

- LEARN more about [Shelburne Community School](#).
- REVIEW the [framework](#) the teacher in the video uses to set his curriculum.

